

Venus, version 2

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Category: H2O: Just Add Water

Genre: Drama, Romance

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2011-10-09 03:16:09

Updated: 2011-10-10 04:34:33

Packaged: 2016-04-26 12:59:26

Rating: T

Chapters: 10

Words: 7,767

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: So, some of you may remember a discontinued fanfic by the name of Venus... Well, it's back and better than ever! Please R&R!

I'm in college and considering a major in literature, so I have a lot of experience with writing :3

1. Prologue

Venus

We all know what happens if a mermaid is in the moonpool when all the planets align with the full moonâ€¦ but what would happen if the full moon was aligned with (only) the planet Venus?

*I do not own H2O: Just add waterâ€¦ and unless I win the lottery, I never will

*This story takes place just under a year after the end of season 3. (Emma is back from her trip around the world)

Prologue

It had been years since any of the girls had been moonstruck.

The mystery of the water tentacle had been solved months ago.

The full moon hadn't posed a threat to any of the four since.

So none of them were prepared for what happened that nightâ€¦

A/N: Due to popular demand... It's finally back! That's right, I'm going to be writing Venus again... but with a couple critical changes. First of all, there won't be any M rated chapters in this version. There will be some other changes to the story along the way, but that's the biggest one... So yup, make sure to R&R!

2. Moonstruck

Moonstruck

Cleo Setori was restless. She knew it would only be another month before Lewis would be home for the summer, but somehow, that made her miss him even more. As she walked down the beach, her own words echoed back from the past, back from that fateful day. "but at least we'll be looking at the same ocean". She smiled to herself as she saw where her aimless wandering had led her "right to Lewis's old secret fishing place, just as the last rays of sunlight were about to be lost behind the horizon. Somewhat cheered by all the memories the place brought back to her, she sank down into the sand to watch the sun set over the ocean shared by Lewis and herself.

A few hours later, Cleo awoke with a start. Confused and disoriented, she tried to remember how she had wound up laying on the beach in the middle of the night. 'That's right,' she remembered. 'I came here to watch the sunset. I must have fallen asleep. Dad and Kim are probably worried.' However, at that moment, all further thought was cut off "the clouds had shifted, revealing the bright, silvery orb that was the full moon. As soon as Cleo caught sight of it, the moon was the only thing in Cleo's mind. No longer aware of her actions, she set off in a trance towards Mako Island.

Rikki Chadwick was angry. Zane had called, yet again, begging for her to take him back. She knew he was sorry for what he had done, but it wasn't enough for her. Every time she went back to Mako, she was reminded of the damage he had caused, and she got angry with him all over again. To make matters worse, instead of counting himself lucky she was even talking to him, he kept asking when she would get back with him. Of course, it wasn't just Zane she was angry with. Most of all, she was angry with herself. Despite all he had done, despite how much she wanted to hate him at the moment, Rikki couldn't help loving him. It was driving her insane.

Of course, life didn't stop and wait for her to sort out her thoughts. It kept on going, whether she was ready or not. And part of life was making sure the laundry didn't get wet. So, cursing under her breath as she went, Rikki stepped out of her trailer to collect the clothes hanging on the clothesline so it wouldn't be soaked in the rain that was supposed to hit overnight. "I can't believe he keeps calling me as if I'd forgive his sorry ass. I ought to." But she didn't finish her mental threat, for at that moment, she caught sight of the full moon. Transfixed, she dropped the laundry basket she was holding and ran for the pier. As soon as she reached the edge of the dock, she leapt into the water, and took off for Mako.

Bella Hartley was disappointed. Even though he had told her beforehand that he wouldn't be able to make it, she had still hoped that Will might be able to make the second half of her performance at the cafe. "Stop it, you're being stupid," she told herself "it's not like he should have to come to your performances every time." her thoughts were cut short as soon as she stepped outside to walk home. For the first time in years, the sight of the full moon had Bella's full attention. She stopped in the middle of the cafe's doorway, causing more than one person to bump into her. However, she took no notice of them as she ran to the land's edge and jumped into the water, then proceeded to swim to Mako as if her life depended on

it.

Emma Gilbert was in bliss. She had just gotten back from her date with Ash, and it had been even more perfect than she had hoped. "Are you alright, dear?" Mrs. Gilbert asked as Emma walked into the kitchen. "I don't think I've seen you grinning like that since you got that tooth pulled back in third grade, and the doctors gave you too many painkillers" "I'm fine, mum" replied Emma, as she fought to control her expression into something more dignified. _'Calm down, Emma!_' she thought to herself _'Just because you had the best date since you got back from the trip around the world, doesn't mean you need to lose your composure like that!_' "Night, mum" Emma said, heading towards the stairs. "Goodnight, dear" Mrs. Gilbert replied, smiling knowingly at her daughter.

Once Emma was in her room, she finally stopped fighting to control her expression. Her face broke out into a broad grin and she stood in front of the window, admiring the beauty of the night sky. As soon as Emma caught sight of the full moon, she grinned even more broadly, opened her window, and jumped out. She landed surprisingly silently and gracefully (especially considering the fact that her room is on the second floor), and ran to the dock in her yard, not even pausing at the edge, but leaping off and into the water below, making a beeline for Mako.

3. The Next Day

Affected

Cleo was the first of the four to arrive in the moonpool. Instead of swimming to the edge of the moonpool, she surfaced near the center of the moonpool, and simply stayed there, staring at the opening at the top of the volcano. One by one, the other three joined her vigil, until Emma, the last to arrive, joined them.

As the first sliver of moonlight became visible, the girls closed their eyes. When the full force of the full moon was shining down on them, they simultaneously opened their eyes, blind to everything but the silvery orb that was the full moon, aware of nothing but its presence and the light filled bubbles spiraling up from the churning water and to the moon.

The next morning, Emma awoke with a start. A glance out the window told her that the sun was far too high in the sky for this to be the time she normally woke up; she must have overslept by several hours. According to her clock, it was 10:30. _'10:30! Why on earth did I sleep that late?_' She wondered. _'and why am I still wearing yesterday's clothes?_' Then it hit her. She had been affected by the full moon.

Half an hour later, the four girls were gathered at Cleo's house. "What was that!" Bella wondered. It's been years since I've beenâ€" "Hold on," Rikki interrupted. "Is anyone else home?" she asked Cleo. "No, Kim and Sam are out shopping and Dad's at work," Cleo replied. "Good," Rikki said. "Because something tells me this isn't a conversation we want them overhearing". "Good point," Bella said. "Alright, we still don't know what happened last night or whyâ€" maybe there was something special about last night's full moon?" Emma pondered. "No, it's perfectly normal for us to have been affected

like that, it isn't like that hasn't happened for years or anything," Rikki replied, sarcasm dripping from her words. "Alright, calm down, you two" Bella intervened, seeing that Emma had been about to make a retort. "Let's see what we can find out," Cleo said, pulling out her laptop. "Let's seeâ€¦ I had Lewis's planetary alignment program installed to my computerâ€¦ it might be able to help us" "Doubt it," Rikki replied. "Since when have any of Lewis's ideas been of use to us?" "They helped when the program showed him that the moon was going to be aligned with all the planets, didn't they?" Cleo snapped. "Besides, we don't know whether it can help or not until we try it!" And with that, she turned her attention back to the screen. "Well, here's something," Cleo said. "According to this, last night, the full moon was aligned perfectly with the planet Venus." "And that helps us how?" Rikki asked. "Well, it means something was definitely up last nightâ€¦" Cleo started. "Wow, shocker," Rikki interjected. "Rikki! You could at least let her finish," Emma scolded. "What are you, my mother?" Rikki asked. Just as Emma opened her mouth to reply, Bella quickly asked "So, what does that mean for us?" "Well, it could mean a lot of thingsâ€¦ but I'm pretty sure it was an isolated incident" Cleo replied. "That makes senseâ€¦ if it was because of the fact that the full moon was aligned with Venus, it shouldn't happen againâ€¦ at least, not until Venus aligns with the full moon again," Bella reasoned. "Which shouldn't be for a while," Cleo said. "Soâ€¦ we're all set then?" Rikki asked. "Well, there's still one thing that bothers me," Emma said. "Last time we were in the moonpool on a full moon, our powers changed." "Good point," Cleo said. "Maybe we should test them out?" "Fine by me," Rikki said. "Alright," Bella replied.

Cleo got up, went to the kitchen, and got a glass of water. When she came back, she placed it on the coffee table. "All right, Emma, can you try using your powers on that please?" Emma obliged, freezing the water in the glass. "Well, it felt the same as when I used my powers yesterday," Emma said. "And you didn't freeze anything beyond the glassâ€¦ I'm no expert, but I'd say your powers are the same as they were before last night" Rikki replied. Cleo and Bella nodded in agreement. "Rikki, can you try heating the water up?" Cleo asked. "Why? We already proved that our powers are the same as before" Rikki wondered. "No, we proved that Emma's powers are the same as before. We still need to make sure the rest of our powers are the same," Cleo replied. "All rightâ€¦" Rikki replied, and even though she thought it was a waste of time, she heated the ice in the glass slowly, until it melted, and then began to boil. "Well, mine's the same as before," Rikki said. "Alright, I'm going to try mine out," Cleo said, and proceeded to make a ball of water rise from the glass, circle the room, and fall back into the glass. "I guess mine's the same as yesterday too," Cleo said. "Well, I guess that just leaves me," Bella said. And with that, she turned the water in the glass into a gel, then solid, and back to a regular liquid again. "Well, now that that's settled," Rikki said "I could really go for a snack." "Settled? We haven't settled anything yet!" Emma replied. "All we did was prove that our powers are the same, we haven't figured out why we reacted like that last night, or how it's affected us" "Maybe it hasn't affected us! Maybe it was an isolated incident, like Cleo said! Ever think of that?" Rikki asked, irritated. "Of course I have," Emma retorted "But we don't know for sure, so we ought to try to figure this out, don't you think?" "I think Rikki's right," Bella interjected. "We don't know much about this, but until we get some more information, it's going to be impossible for us to figure anything new out." "I guess we're done for now," Cleo said, "but if

any of us notices anything weird, we'll have to tell the others about it right away." "Agreed," said Emma. Bella and Rikki nodded, and the four headed to the kitchen for a much needed snack.

4. Changes

Changes

The next dayâ€¦

Rikki was confused. She had just gotten up for the day, and had changed into her favorite pair of jeans. The problem was, they didn't seem to fit her anymore. _'That's weird,' _she thought. _'I've had these jeans for a few monthsâ€¦ why didn't they shrink in the wash until now?_' It wasn't that the jeans were too tightâ€”if anything, they felt a bit too loose. The problem was that they were too short. Considering Rikki had stopped growing years ago, this was very strange indeed. Frowning to herself, she headed to the bathroom to put on her makeup. When she looked in the mirror, she almost screamed. Her hair, which had always been unruly and almost unmanageable, was hanging in elegant curls that framed her face beautifully. And unless she was imagining it, her eyes were bluer than she remembered them ever being.

Meanwhile, Cleo was facing similar changes. She had looked into the mirror that morning to find that her hair, which she usually needed to attack with a straightener for at least half an hour, was already straighter than she had ever managed to get it with the straightener, silky smooth, and several inches longer than usual. And her teeth, which she had always considered to be just a little too big (whenever she confronted the others about it, they insisted there was nothing wrong with themâ€” unfortunately, it wasn't enough to stop her insecurities), were now perfect.

Bella stared at her reflection in shock. She had always thought her face made her look younger than she wasâ€”"too much baby fat. Not anymore, though. Overnight, she seemed to have lost all her baby fat, leaving behind a far more elegant, refined appearance. _'Well,' _she thought, a smile playing on her lips _'I guess I won't have to worry about people thinking I'm younger than I am anymore'_ . Turning away from the mirror, she went to get dressed. Unfortunately, she faced a similar problem to Rikki's. When she put on her jeans, she realized that not only were they a little too loose, but far too short.

When Emma woke up in the morning, she got dressed in shorts and a cami, and without a glance at the mirror, she went out jogging. So it wasn't until she got back from her morning jog that she realized she seemed to have lost all the baby fat in her face overnight, and that her lips (though she never mentioned it to anyone, she always felt like her bottom lip was just a little too big to match her upper one) now matched perfectly. Much to her embarrassment, she realized another change as she pulled on her favorite shirt- overnight, it seemed to have become too loose around the middle, and just a little too tight in other areas.

Less than an hour later, the four were gathered in Emma's room. For a few seconds, the girls just stared at each other, shocked by the changes they saw in their friends. Finally, Bella broke the silence. "Soâ€¦ does anyone have any ideas as to why we look soâ€¦" "hot?"

Rikki finished. "Rikki!" Emma protested. "What? Don't pretend you don't know it's true," Rikki retorted. "And as for whyâ€¦ I think we can safely assume it has to do with that last full moon, don't you?" the other three nodded in agreement. "I've been thinking about that actually," Cleo began. "And I was just wonderingâ€¦ maybe it has something to do with the fact that it was Venus the moon was aligned with? I mean, I did some researchâ€¦ and apparently, Venus was the Roman goddess ofâ€¦" "â€¦Love and beauty," Emma finished. "Exactly," Cleo said. "so I was thinkingâ€¦ maybe when we were in the moonpoolâ€¦ the combined energy from Venus and the moonâ€¦ maybe..." "Turned us into the four hottest girls on the gold coast?" Rikki finished. "Something like that," Cleo replied. "Works for me," Rikki said. "Exceptâ€¦ now none of our clothes fit," Emma mused. "I guess that means we'll just have to go shopping, doesn't it?" Bella replied, smiling broadly. "Couldn't have put it better myself," Rikki said, grinning. And with that, the four best friends set out to replenish their wardrobes.

At the end of the day, the four girls returned to their homes exhausted, but satisfied with their purchases. Among Cleo's favorites were the lilac sundress that complimented her figure and accented her long, glossy hair, and a pair of matching sandals. Emma favored the beaded icy blue halter top she had found, as well as the almost-black jean shorts Rikki had found her to go with it. Bella's favorite was a turquoise shrug and black belt (which went over a white cami), that went perfectly with the new shorts she had found. For Rikki, the best finds were a red T-shirt with the logo of her favorite band on it, and a pair of black jeggings (she had always liked them, but had never really been able to pull off the look with her shorter figure). However, the most exhausting part of the trip wasn't the shopping. Instead, it was having to deal with all the guys at the mall. The ones who simply looked, but kept walking were okay, but one of them had gone further than that, trying to, as he had put it, "score a date with one of the hottest chikkies in town" (okay, so it had been Nateâ€¦ but still). As none of the girls had seen their boyfriends (or in Rikki's case, ex-boyfriend), all four went to bed that night wondering the same thing: _'how will he react?'

5. No Matter What

No Matter What

Bella was nervous. She was standing in front of Will's boathouse, gathering the courage she needed to knock on his door. She knew that he would be home, she had called beforehand to make sure. All he knew was that she was coming over to discuss something. _'What if he doesn't like me anymore?' _she wondered. _'What ifâ€¦ what if, now that I look likeâ€¦ like this, he acts differently around me?' _suddenly, she wished none of this had happened to her. _'Why me?' _she wondered. _'I didn't ask for any of this!'

Breathing slowly and deeply to calm herself, she poised her fist to knock on his door. _'It'll be fine,' _she told herself, trying to reassure herself. _'Besides, it's not like you can do anything about it now. What's done is done.'

Finally, after having stood in front of it for several minutes, she knocked on his door. "It's open," Will called out from inside the boathouse. Taking a deep breath, Bella opened the door and stepped inside. As soon as Will saw her, his jaw dropped.

Before that moment, he had thought the previous Bella was the most beautiful person he had ever, and would ever see. How the universe loved to prove him wrong. For a second, he just stood there, gaping. Then, seeming to realize himself, he shut his mouth. "Hey," he said, smiling and kissing his now drop-dead gorgeous girlfriend's cheek in welcome. "So, what was it that you wanted to talk about?" "Take a guess," she said, raising an eyebrow. "I don't know," he answered. "that's why I'm asking" "You can't tell just by looking at me?" she questioned in disbelief. "Oh," he said. "that" Bella nodded. "So, what happened?" Will asked. "because unless my memory's failing me, you were at least two inches shorter the day before yesterday" "I was," Bella answered glumly. "But that night was a full moon" "The full moon did this to you?" Will asked in disbelief. "Well, not just meâ€| Cleo, Emma, and Rikki look a bit different too," Bella confirmed. "Butâ€| why?" Will asked. "I mean, it isn't like you haven't seen a full moon beforeâ€| why didn't it do anything before this?" "We're not entirely sure," Bella told him "But we think it's because the full moon was aligned with Venus," "â€|which was named after the goddess of beauty," Will finished for her. Bella nodded. "Well, I guess that'd make senseâ€| so, is that it then?" "What do you mean?" Bella asked, confused. "Well, when we talked on the phone, you sounded really upsetâ€| I thought you were going to tell me you were moving, or something like thatâ€|" "Soâ€| you don't think it's that big a deal?" Bella verified. "Well, it's not like it changes anything, is it?" he replied. "I mean, I always thought you were the most beautiful girl I'd ever met anywaysâ€|" as he realized what he had said, his voice trailed off, and his cheeks tinged pink. "Really?" Bella asked. Will nodded, regaining his confidence. "Of course, that's not why I fell in love with you," he said, pulling her into a hug.

Suddenly, Bella felt stupid for ever having worried about his reaction. She should have known that it wouldn't change anythingâ€| after all, he had cared about her enough not to tell anyone about her being a mermaid, hadn't he? Not only that, but, despite knowing her secret, after those first few days he had known, he hadn't shown any sign of preferring Bella the mermaid over Bella the person. Suddenly, she knew the truth that fear had blinded her to: Will loved her, no matter what she looked like.

6. Who I am

Who I am

Meanwhile, Emma was nervous for similar reasons. Unlike Bella however, she had decided the best tactic was to act as though nothing had changed. '_Maybe he won't notice,'_ she thought. '_It's not like I've changed that much, anywaysâ€|'_ of course, Emma didn't really believe he wouldn't notice, not for a second. And so, despite her attempts to reassure herself, Emma was fighting to keep a look of nervous worry from her face as she headed to her job at the stables, where she would see Ash for the first time since she had changed. Luck was on her side. When she got there, Ash was in the middle of teaching a lesson, so she was able to slip by without him noticing. She set to work immediately, getting the horses ready for the Girl Scout troop that would be coming in a little while to learn to ride. When the troop got there, Ash still wasn't back from the trail that he and his student were on, so Emma started teaching the scouts about how to groom a horse that he finally saw her. For a second he just

stared at her, until he remembered that he was supposed to be helping with the scouts too. _'So much for him not noticing,'_ Emma thought bitterly to herself.

It wasn't until several hours later, when the Girl Scouts left, that Ash was finally able to confront her about it. "So," he began, as he groomed his horse, Rebel. "What happened, exactly?" "What do you mean?" Emma asked, hoping he'd drop it. "I think you know whatâ€¦" _'Well, so much for that tacticâ€¦'_ she thought to herself _'I guess I'd better explain, before he starts making assumptionsâ€¦'_ "Well, it was a full moon two nights ago," Emma began. "Cleo, Rikki, Bella and I got a little moonstruck, I guessâ€¦" "Wait," Ash interjected, "I thought you didn't get moonstruck anymore?" "So did we," Emma replied. "But apparently, that doesn't apply when the full moon's aligned with Venus" "But stillâ€¦ just because you got moonstruck shouldn't mean that there are any effects after the moon setsâ€¦ right?" Ash asked. "Usually no, but the four of us went to the moonpool while moonstruckâ€¦ and apparently the combined power of the full moon and Venus was enough to do this to us" "Waitâ€¦ Venus?" Ash asked, and idea forming in his head "that was the name of the Roman goddess ofâ€¦" "Love and beauty," Emma finished for him. "We aren't entirely sure, but we think that might be why weâ€¦ changed like this" "Well, that makes more sense than anything else I can think of," Ash replied. "So, you up for a juice?" "Wait, what?" Emma asked, not entirely sure she had heard him right. "You up for a juice?" Ash repeated. "Sure," Emma replied, smiling.

As the couple headed hand in hand to the cafÃ©, Emma smiled to herself. _'I should have known it wouldn't matter to him,'_ she thought. After allâ€¦ he cared about her enough that it didn't matter that she was a mermaid, and that was more than enough proof for Emma that he loved her for who she was.

7. Secrets and Runaways

Secrets and Runaways

Cleo's phone was ringing. She checked the caller ID. Lewis. Cleo started to have a mini panic attack. What was she going to say to him? How could she possibly explain what had happened? Suddenly, a thought occurred to her. _'I could always wait until he gets back for the summer to tell him,'_ she thought. _'It'd be a lot easier to explain if he was here to see for himself.'_ That gave her a few months to figure out what exactly she was going to say to him. _'It's not lying exactly,'_ she thought, _'just holding off until the right moment'_ With a start, she realized that the phone was still ringing. Just as it rang for the last time before it would go to voicemail, she hit the talk button. "Hello?" she said, making her breathing sound a little fast, as if she had run to the phone to answer it, explaining (albeit falsely) why it had taken her so long to answer the phone. The two of them talked for almost an hour, about when Lewis would be coming home, plans for the summer, and most importantly, how much they missed each other. When they hung up, there was only one thing on Cleo's mind: if she wasn't lying, then why did she feel so guilty?

Meanwhile, Rikki was employing a similar tactic to Cleo's. She had decided shortly after the change that she would stay away from the cafÃ©, only going there if it was absolutely necessary. That way, she

wouldn't have to deal with Zane"she figured that if he was persistent now, it was nothing compared to how he would be if he found out about her change. Unfortunately, her plan to keep it a secret from Zane was put to an abrupt end. As she was walking down her favorite stretch of beach, Rikki didn't notice until it was too late that Zane was sitting on the beach, watching the sunset. She decided to keep walking, hoping he wouldn't notice her. "Hey, Rikki!" Zane called. "Long time, no see!" _'No such luck, then'_ Rikki thought bitterly as she turned to face him. "What do you want, Zane?" she asked. Turning around had been a big mistake. Apparently, Zane hadn't noticed her changed appearance until she turned to face him, because when she did, his jaw dropped. A second or two later, he seemed to snap out of it. "Oh, just the usual," he said, standing up and walking over to her. "Wondering when you're finally going to forgive me so we can get back together" "Let's just get one thing straight," Rikki clarified. "Even if I did forgive you, that doesn't mean we'd be getting back together, okay?" "Okay, okay," Zane said, putting his hands up in surrender. "If you don't care about me anymore, just say so, and I'll leave you alone, alright?" "Really?" Rikki asked. "Really." Rikki opened her mouth to speak, but she couldn't bring herself to say it. "That's what I thought," Zane said, grinning broadly. "Unless" this is for a new boyfriend?" Zane asked, catching hold of a stray lock of Rikki's hair and tucking it behind her ear. "I have to go," Rikki said, walking away at a fast pace. "You can't run away forever!" Zane called after her. _'Oh yeah?'_ Rikki thought. _'Just watch me.'_

8. Moon Time Again

Moon Time Again

The weeks following the events of the full moon passed fairly quickly, especially considering the changes the girls had gone through. They learned to cope with it fairly quickly though, and pretty soon things were back to normal. Beyond their changes in appearance, none of the four girls had been changed by the last full moon. At least, that's what they thought.

It was the day before the next full moon, and the girls were gathered at Emma's house, trying to figure out what to do about the next full moon. "I thought we had decided it was an isolated incident?" asked Bella. "We did, but" what if something's changed?" Emma wondered. "What if what happened last month triggered something, and now we're vulnerable to the moon again?" "I have been having a bad feeling about it" Cleo said a worried expression on her face. "That's what you say every month," Rikki retorted. "Besides, if nothing else has changed between then and now, nothing will. The only reason we got moonstruck last time was because Venus was aligned with the moon, but it's not anymore, so we should be fine" "Rikki has a point," Emma said, and Bella nodded in agreement. "Well, I'd still feel better if we were all together," Cleo said. "Cleo, we can't keep doing that forever, you know" Rikki argued. "The only reason we did that before was because we had proof that we needed to stay away from the moon. This time, there's really no reason why we need to hide out." "Besides," Bella said. "Even if we needed to, I don't think we'd be able to get any of our houses to ourselves on this short of a notice, do you?" (Even though Bella hadn't been there for the first year of Cleo, Emma, and Rikki being mermaids, she'd heard a lot of stories about it). "She's right," Emma said, acknowledging defeat. "fine,"

Cleo said, realizing that if even Emma wasn't on her side anymore, there was no way it was going to happen. "But even if we aren't together, we should all at least try to stay away from the moon" Emma and Bella nodded in agreement. "Whatever makes you happy," Rikki said. Coming from her, that was probably the closest thing to agreement they'd get, so they let it drop, moving on to talk about other things.

That eveningâ€|

Rikki's phone was ringing. She already had a pretty good idea of who it is and what they were going to say, but she checked the caller ID anyway. Sure enough, it was Emma. _'May as well get this over with,'_ Rikki thought, and hit the talk button. "Hey Em," she said. "Hey," Emma said. "I'm just calling to remind you, the moon rises inâ€|" "â€|15 minutes. I know, Em." Rikki said, cutting Emma off. "I'll be careful." "Alrightâ€|" Emma said, in a voice that told Rikki that she wasn't really convinced. "Is that all then, or are you going to remind me to brush my teeth before I go to bed too mum?" Rikki asked, annoyed. _'Doesn't she trust me at all?'_ she wondered. "Very funny," Emma said, her tone implying the exact opposite. "I just don't want anything to happen to any of us," she said. "Are you calling Cleo or Bella to remind them?" Rikki asked. "Well, noâ€|" Emma said "but only because Cleo already called me, and we decided that she'd call Bella, and I'd call you" "Whatever," Rikki said. Suddenly, she heard voices on the other end of the line besides Emma's that sounded distant, like someone at Emma's house was talking to her. "Well, I've got to go now, my family's waiting for me to start the movie, bye!" Emma said. "Bye," Rikki said, and hung up.

Half an hour later, Rikki headed to the kitchen to get a glass of water. "Hey pumpkin," her Dad said, smiling when he saw her. "How's it going?" "Fine," said Rikki, opening the cabinet to get a glass. "How was work?" "The usual," her Dad replied, as Rikki filled her glass with water. "Rich snobs barking orders at me all dayâ€| but hey, it's a living," he said, smiling slightly. Silence. "Rikki? Rikki, are you alright?" her Dad asked. Rikki was still standing at the sink, staring at her glass, which had a reflection of the moon from the open kitchen window in it. "Yeah Dad, I'm fineâ€|" Rikki said, snapping out of it. "I'm just not feeling all that wellâ€| I think I'm going to turn in early tonight." "Alright, pumpkin," her Dad said, "feel better soon, okay?" "I'll try," Rikki said, rubbing her forehead as she went back to her room. _'Thank God,'_ she thought. _'For a second, I thought he wasn't going to buy it.'_

****A/N: Alright, so... up until this point, it's pretty much been the same story as before. The next chapter is where it starts branching off into something different, so be prepared!****

9. Closing Time

****A/N: Alright guys, this is where the new version starts to head off in a totally different direction than the old one. Sadly, this also means that my rate of posting will slow down quite a bit... (Obviously, since I posted the first 8 chapters within the span of an hour, and I can't exactly do that when I'm writing new material, instead of just tweaking the old). Another disadvantage for you guys: now more than ever, you REALLY need to review if you want to see the**

story continued! After all, now there's a lot more work involved than just tweaking material I already had, so I'm not likely to continue if I don't know that people are actually enjoying the results of my efforts.**

Closing Time

As soon as she heard the door shut behind her, Rikki set to work. First, she pulled several towels, pillows, and blankets out of her closet and arranged them under the covers to make it look like the figure of a sleeping girl. Then, very quietly, she opened her window, climbed out the window, and closed it again from the outside, and disappeared into the night, her target the only thing on her mind.

Meanwhile, back at the caf  , Zane was just closing up shop for the night. He had just returned to his office, when he heard a creak in the floorboards.

"Hello?" he called out tentatively. "Is someone there?" He didn't hear a response, but the floorboards creaked again. _'Robbers,'_ Zane thought.

"Whoever you are, I'm armed!" _'Well, if you count having a paperweight as 'armed','_ he added to himself, making a mental note to beef up the security as soon as possible. Still no response, except for the creaking floorboards. Unable to take the suspense anymore, Zane stood up from his desk, and started to head towards the office door. But before he could get to it, the door swung open, and Rikki was sprinting towards him.

"Zane!" she cried happily, pulling him into a tight hug. "I've missed you SO much! Let's never break up again, alright?"

Zane stood there for a moment, immobilized from shock. He hadn't known what exactly he had been expecting, but it certainly hadn't been _this_. Not that he minded, of course... He tentatively returned the hug. _'I must've dozed off,'_ he thought to himself. _'Because there's no way that this is actually happening...'_

Suddenly, Rikki let go of him. "You're not saying anything..." she said, biting her lip... "Do you not love me anymore?" before Zane even had time to answer, Rikki had already burst into tears.

"I knew it," she sobbed. "I knew you wouldn't want me anymore, nobody does"

By this point, Zane was utterly bewildered. This couldn't be a dream; it was far too weird. He knew he wouldn't be creative enough to come up with something this twisted in his wildest dreams... so what was going on? He didn't have much time to think about it though, because Rikki was starting to walk out the door, sobbing even harder than ever. No matter how weird, it might be, he couldn't pass up a chance to be with Rikki again.

"Rikki, wait," he said. Immediately, Rikki turned back around to face him, stopped sobbing, and gave him her full attention.

Zane turned slightly red, embarrassed. It wasn't really his style, but... he needed to let her know how he felt. "Of course I still love

you," he said.

Instantly, Rikki's upset expression changed to one of bliss, and she flung her arms around him again. "I'm so glad," she said, relief coloring her tone. "I don't know what I would've done if you didn't... I just love you so much!" she said.

As much as Zane loved hearing all of this from Rikki... it just didn't seem like she was herself right now. She'd been consistently rejecting him for months now, so why stop now?

"Rikki... are you okay?" He asked, uncertain.

"Of course I am, why wouldn't I be? You love me, how could anything be wrong?"

Now Zane knew something was wrong.

"Rikki... are you... are you drunk?" he asked, grasping at straws for what could possibly have her acting so weird. She didn't really strike him as the type who would go out and get drunk (especially since she was underage), but he couldn't really think of anything else that would make her act like this.

"Of course not!" Rikki said, smiling broadly. "All I had to drink tonight was a glass of water! I love water... it's so pretty, especially when the moon's reflecting off it," she said, grinning stupidly.

So that's what it was. Zane mentally smacked himself on the forehead for not having gotten it earlier. In his defense, he hadn't had to think about things like that in a long time. _'Come to think of it, Rikki hasn't had to think about things like that in a long time either,'_ he thought. _'I thought she wasn't supposed to get moonstruck anymore?'_ _He would've thought about it longer, but there were more pressing matters at hand. Specifically, Rikki had now seized his hand, and was trying to pull him out the door with her. "Come on," she was saying. "Let's go for a swim!"

"I don't think so," Zane said, standing his ground. He might not know as much about mermaids as Lewis or Will, but he knew better than to let a mermaid go swimming during a full moon, at the very least. "How about we stay here instead?" he offered. Seeing Rikki pout, he quickly added "we could... cuddle or something" the idea sounded kind of weird of him to suggest, but one look at Rikki's face told him he'd said the right thing. Her entire face had lit up like a kid on Christmas, and next thing he knew, she was dragging him back into the office, over to the couch.

"I loooooove you," Rikki said, smiling and snuggling up against him.

Zane smiled. He knew this wasn't Rikki, not really... but he may as well enjoy having her back with him, even if it was just until the moon went down. He wrapped his arms around her and planted a kiss on the top of her head, trying to push his fear of the coming morning out of his head.

The Truth?

The next morning, Rikki woke up confused and disoriented. She'd had the strangest dream... Suddenly, she realized that she was snuggled up against Zane, and sat bolt upright. It hadn't been a dream after all, then... but what _had _happened to her? She thought about it for a few seconds... and it hit her. Last night, for the second time in over a year, she'd been moonstruck. She glanced over at the clock, which read 7:28 am._'That's weird,'_ Rikki thought. _'The moon set hours ago, but I can still remember everything that happened last night.'_ Even stranger still, she couldn't bring herself to feel regretful for what she had done. Horribly embarrassed maybe, but she didn't regret it. _'Well,'_ she thought. _'Zane was right when he said I wouldn't be able to keep running from him foreverâ€| just not for the reasons he thought.'_ Not sure what to do from here, she finally decided she'd better get out of there before Zane woke up. She didn't have the energy to deal with him just yet, not until she'd decided what to do about what had happened. Silently, she stood up, crossed the room, and walked out the door, closing it softly behind her. Once she got back home, Rikki carefully climbed back in through her window, pulled the towels out from under her covers, and climbed into bed.

When Rikki woke up again for the second time that day, the clock read 10:56 A.M. She stretched her arms and legs, and got out of bed. Rubbing her eyes, she crossed the room, and opened the door. She walked into the kitchen to get herself some breakfast, yawning as she went.

"Hey Pumpkin," Her Dad said. "Feeling better?"

"Yeah," she answered. "I guess I just needed a good night's sleep" She felt a bad about lying to her Dad, but it wasn't like she could tell him the truthâ€"it would either get her grounded for the next lifetime (if she left out the part about being moonstruck), get her locked in a nuthouse for the rest of her life (if she told him that the moon made her do it), or experimented on by scientists and exposed to the world (if she told him everything). So instead of coming clean, she just pulled a bowl out of the cabinet, poured some cereal and milk into it, grabbed a spoon, and started eating.

After she ate her breakfast, Rikki headed back to her room and switched her phone on, discovering that she had 27 missed calls from last night. Three were from Bella, nine from Cleo, and fifteen from Emma. _'Well,'_ she thought. _'I guess this proves who's the most paranoid'_ She knew she'd have to call them back right away so they wouldn't freak out anymore than they already hadâ€| the only question left was if she should call them individually, or make a four-way call. She hesitated for a minute, but ended up placing a four-way call, so she'd be able to get it over with faster. Just as Rikki predicted, Emma was the first to pick up.

Instead of a simple "hi", Emma launched right into her line of questioning. "Rikki! What happened? I couldn't get ahold of you last night, are you alright?"

A second later, Cleo picked up. "Rikki, what happened? Why didn't you pick up the phone? Did you get moonstruck?"

But before Cleo could finish her sentence, Bella picked up. "Rikki, are you okay? I tried calling you last night, but you didn't answer!"

Rikki had been planning on telling the other three what had happened, but suddenly, she couldn't bring herself to do it. After all, it would just make them worry.

"Sorry," Rikki said. "My phone's battery died, and I couldn't find the charger until just now."

"That's all?" Bella asked. Rikki almost told them everything. Almost.

"Yeah, that's all," she told them. "Thank God," Cleo said. "We thought you had seen the moon and gone crazy again."

"Well, I didn't," Rikki said.

"You're sure?" Emma asked. "Can you remember everything you did last night?"

"Yes mum," Rikki retorted. "So, is there something else, or is that you three wanted to talk about?" "I guess that's all," Emma answered reluctantly, still suspicious.

"That pretty much covers it," Bella verified.

"Right!" Rikki said. "Well, I guess I'll see you guys later!"

Little did Rikki know, after she hung up, the other three stayed on the line.

"So, do you guys think she was telling the truth?" Bella asked.

"She sounded like she was," Cleo said. "Besides, she wouldn't really have any reason to lie, would she?"

"I don't know, but I didn't really feel like she was being entirely honest, either" Emma replied. "So, what should we do?" Cleo asked.

"I say we keep an eye on her," Emma answered. "If she's lying, she must have a reason, and we need to find out what that reason is"

End
file.